

First Site in Addison County Funded □ □ □ □

Vermont's first community health center facility in Addison County will be built and an Essex County site will be refurbished with \$2.2 million in new Affordable Care Act grants that the Vermont congressional delegation announced today.

The Community Health Centers of the Rutland Region was awarded \$1.3 million to construct an office in Shoreham, Vt. The new Addison County facility is to be built on a site where a 2010 fire, sparked by lightning, destroyed the 200-year-old building that housed the office of the community's only physician. The satellite office will be the first Federally Qualified Health Center site in the rural county of 37,000 residents.

Northern Counties Health Care, based in St. Johnsbury, Vt., will receive \$874,668 in the latest round of grants under the Affordable Care Act. The funds are to expand and modernize a building in Island Pond, Vt., to increase medical and dental space.

"With these two new grants, we continue to expand primary health and dental care in the state of Vermont through the community health center program, which now provides care to more than 110,000 Vermonters. Our goal is to make sure that everyone in Vermont has access to high-quality primary care regardless of income and we're making real progress toward that goal," said U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.).

A Sanders provision in the 2010 health care law authorized \$11 billion to build, expand, and operate more community health centers nationwide. An additional \$1.5 billion was allotted to increase the number of primary care providers in underserved areas. The funding for these critical primary-care centers was designed to double to 40 million the number of patients served by health centers regardless of their ability to pay.

U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) said, "I know how essential community health centers are to Vermont's health care infrastructure. Rural areas, like much of Vermont, depend on these vital community-based resources to ensure the availability of local, dependable health services, and I am pleased that these grants will strengthen our health care network to serve Vermonters."

U.S. Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) said, "Community health services are integral to ensuring all Vermonters have access to affordable, quality health care. Increasing the availability of primary care services in rural communities is good for Vermont and saves money through investments in preventative care. Vermont leads the nation in providing quality health care to all its citizens regardless of income. These grants will ensure we continue this leading role."

In Vermont, there are now eight federally qualified health centers. Each has satellite sites creating a total of 41 locations treating more than 110,000 patients, a greater percentage of the total population than any other state. A nearly-completed \$11.3 million project will double the size of the Community Health Centers of Burlington, the state's largest. That expansion was designed to allow the center to treat another 3,500 patients, a 25 percent increase. Another \$10 million in federal funds was previously awarded to other Vermont health centers to hire more staff and renovate facilities.

Nationwide, the health care law already has supported 190 construction and renovation projects at health centers and supported the creation of 67 new health center sites across the country. During the next two years, the law will support more than 485 new health center construction and renovation projects and create at least 245 new community health center sites.

Open to everyone, the centers care for patients covered by Medicaid, Medicare and private insurance, as well as those who have no insurance. Payments are on a sliding scale, so people with low or moderate incomes can afford the services.